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The Manchester Grammar School

Entrance Examination 2019
English Section B - Comprehension

Comprehension Passage

Printed in this booklet you will find the passage on which the comprehension paper is based. The questions are printed in the blue booklet and you should write your answers in the spaces provided on those pages.

You have a minimum of 5 minutes to read through the passage carefully, making any notes that you need alongside the text. You should not begin answering questions until the 5 minute period has finished.

Do not open this booklet until told to do so.

Read through the passage very carefully. We recommend that you spend at least five minutes reading and re-reading the following material before you begin to answer the questions.

The story takes place in a school, during Miss B's class.

She was a bunched little body and the school had christened her Crabby; she had a sour yellow look, floppy hair coiled in earphones and the skin and voice of a turkey. We were all afraid of the gobbling Miss B; she spied, she pried, she crouched, she crept, she pounced - she was a terror.

Each morning was war without declaration; no one knew who would catch it next.

We stood to attention, half-crippled in our desks, till Miss B walked in, whacked the walls with a ruler, and fixed us with her squinting eye. "Good morning, children!"

"Good morning, Teacher!"

The greeting was like a rattling of swords. Then she would scowl at the floor and begin to growl "Ar Farther...."; at which we said the Lord's Prayer. But scarcely had we bellowed the last Amen than Crabby coiled, uncoiled and sprang, and knocked some poor boy sideways.

One seldom knew why; one was always off guard, for the punishment preceded the charge. The charge, however, followed hard upon it, to a light shower of angry spitting.

"Shuffling your feet! Playing with the desk! Smirking at that miserable Betty! I will not have it. I'll not, I say. I repeat - I will not have it!"

So we did not much approve of Crabby. And indeed there came the inevitable day when rebellion raised its flag, when the tension was broken and a hero emerged whom we would have gladly named streets after, though we gave him little support at the time...

Spadge Hopkins it was, and I must say we were surprised. He was one of those heavy, full-grown boys, designed for the great outdoors. The sight of him squeezed into his tiny desk was worse than a bullock in ballet-shoes. He wasn't much of a scholar; he groaned as he worked, or hacked at his desk with a jack-knife. Miss B took her pleasure in goading him, in forcing him to read out loud; or asking him sudden unintelligible questions which made him flush and stumble.

The great day came. Crabby B was at her sourest, and Spadge Hopkins had had enough. He began to writhe in his desk, and kick his boots, and mutter, "She'd better look out. 'Er, - Crabby B. She'd better, that's all." Then he threw down his pen, said, "Sod it all," got up and walked to the door.

"And where are you going, young man, may I ask?" said Crabby with her awful leer.

Spadge paused and looked her straight in the eye.

"If it's any business of yours."

We shivered with pleasure at this defiance; Spadge leisurely made for the door.

“Sit down this instant!” Crabby suddenly screamed. “I won’t have it!”

“Ta-ta,” said Spadge.

Then Crabby sprang like a yellow cat, spitting and clawing with rage. She caught Spadge in the doorway and fell upon him. Spadge caught her hands in his great red fists and held her at arm’s length, struggling.

“Come and help me, someone!” wailed Crabby. But nobody moved; we just watched.

We saw Spadge lift her up and place her on top of the cupboard, then walk out of the door and away. There was a moment of silence, then we all laid down our pens and began to stamp on the floor in unison.

Crabby stayed where she was, on top of the cupboard, drumming her heels and weeping.

END OF PASSAGE